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# FOREIGN DEPARTMENT



IN CHARGE OF  
LAVINIA L. DOCK

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## THE PARIS CONFERENCE

THE period of two months' time which, owing to the priority of our annual meetings at home, has elapsed since the date when the Paris Conference was held and before it could be reported, only suffices to strengthen and confirm the feeling which impressed us all profoundly at the moment when we took part in its sessions, namely, that it was the most important gathering of nurses which has ever taken place; and that, through the character of its membership and by reason of its recognition by the heads of the municipal government of Paris, it has had and will have an influence wide and weighty beyond what any of us had hoped or expected. Our meetings in Paris occurred at a psychological moment. The question of raising the standard of nursing education is one of those most close to the hearts of a distinguished group both of men and women in France, whom we may call for our purpose, the Progressives, and to these, we came as allies, while, at the same time finding in them the strongest supporters of the principles we stand for.

The full importance of the official recognition with which we were honored will not be realized until the vast extent of municipal control of hospital work in Paris is understood, for this system is as different as possible from that in the United States. On many lines of administration and general management it is superior to ours, but just now what I wish is, not to compare, but to make clear just what the official recognition of the International Conference implied.

At home, it is easy enough to get prominent men—mayors, governors, hospital directors, etc., to address our meetings; they say all manner of kind things—we take them cordially and proceed to our business. The mayor or the governor has little or no influence in hospital management, and the hospital directors direct only one hospital. Not so in Paris. Here is a department of the government called the *Assistance Publique* of Paris. At its head is a director appointed by the Minister of the

Interior for an indefinite period, and associated with him is a council, whose powers, while legally only advisory, are morally and actually very great, and from whose deliberations many reforms have arisen. Besides advisory power, the council visits and inspects the hospitals. This city department of the *Assistance Publique* controls not only the management of certain classes of dependents with whom we will not now concern ourselves, but *all* of the Paris hospitals. In other words, instead of having, as is our case at home, say in New York, a number of large hospitals managed by voluntary private associations, with some half dozen or so supported and managed by the city, in Paris there are no large general hospitals privately managed. All the hospitals are city hospitals and the Director of the General Administration of the *Assistance Publique* and his advisory council are placed over all the directors of all these vast institutions, for Paris takes care of its sick on a vast scale. There are here fourteen large general hospitals for acute cases; seven special hospitals; six maternities; seven hospitals for children; twenty-six institutions for chronic and incurable, blind, insane, infirm, and aged persons; four orphanages; two convalescent homes, and eight central service establishments for supplying the hospitals, such as central store-houses, central bakery, butchery, pharmacy, etc. These institutions provide care for, in round numbers, not less than thirty-five thousand patients and employ more than five thousand nurses. These nurses are encouraged to remain in the service, receiving, after thirty years of service, pension and quarters. Moreover, the Administration conducts a number of schools of professional instruction with diplomas, and, in pursuance of its fixed policy to improve standards of nursing, it is at this moment erecting, on the extensive domain of the Salpêtrière, a splendid separate school for training nurses, with single bedrooms, lecture halls and amphitheatre, and all of the comforts, advantages, and prestige for attracting probationers which we are accustomed to in our Nurses' Homes and Training-schools, but which is new in Paris, for this splendid school is the first one to be erected in connection with the public hospitals of Paris for the purpose of training nurses according to the methods established by Florence Nightingale.

It will now be seen that it meant something of unusual importance for the International Conference of Nurses to be received with serious dignity and cordial good will by the officials who hold this enormous power over the conditions of hospitals and of nursing. M. Léon Bourgeois, a member of the Senate and one of the *Conseil de Surveillance*, gave his name as Honorary President, though he himself was absent at the Peace Conference of the Hague.

M. Mésureur, the Director of the General Administration of the *Assistance Publique* of Paris, was the president of the conference, and opened its first session, besides reading a paper, while on the opening morning a row of dignified and important personages filled the platform: M. Mirman, Director of *l'Assistance et Hygiène Publique* in the Department of the Interior; Dr. Lande, member of the national council of *Assistance Publique* and Administrator of the civil hospitals of Bordeaux; Dr. Anna Hamilton, Directress and resident physician of the *Maison de Santé Protestante* in Bordeaux; Mme. Alphen-Salvador, foundress and president of the Association for the Development of the Care of the Sick (rue Amyot); Baronne James de Rothschild, president of the School for Nurses (rue Vercingetorix); M. Felix Voisin, vice-president of the *Conseil de Surveillance*; M. Strauss, Senator and president of the national council of *Assistance Publique*; and M. Navarre, president of the fifth commission municipal council, with the honorable president and vice-presidents of the International Council of Nurses; then, too, there was present at almost every meeting the director of the Salpêtrière, M. Montreuil, who will have under his immediate charge the splendid new School for Nurses, and also the fine new hospital for acute cases which is being erected on the broad domains of the Salpêtrière, where the new nurses will be trained.

It may well be imagined that the interest was profound when M. Mésureur declared the conference open, and, after greeting the various members of the assembly, proceeded to read his paper showing what the department which he directs has done and is doing in nursing education. The entire session was given to the work being done in France, and the speakers were so distinct and clear in enunciation that it was easy to follow them. It was a remarkable group of persons who, one after another, addressed the assembly. M. Mésureur stands out strongly among them all. There is something about him like Lincoln—in his expression there is an absolute goodness overweighed by care, and one feels that he has pushed his great work at heavy cost to himself. How colossal this work is cannot be told; it can only be understood by visiting—not one or two—but many of the great hospitals. It is to be hoped that the hospital directors, nurses, and above all, the physicians, will hold up his hands and give him support and appreciation now while he needs it.

Next spoke that grand old revolutionary scientist Dr. Bourneville, who is more like our venerable Dr. Jacobi than any one else, and then

we heard the intensely interesting story of the laicisation movement of 1877 and how it came about. Dr. Bourneville was the first among French physicians to feel the influence of Miss Nightingale, for, as early as 1862 having been dissatisfied with the nursing methods as carried on under the nuns who were then everywhere in hospitals, in 1869 his attention was attracted by an article in the *Lancet*, and in 1871 he wrote upon the organization of a school for nurses to replace the sisters. In 1877 he went to London and studied the English hospitals and nursing and in the same year began the movement to replace the sisters by trained lay nurses. The struggle has been a bitter one, and both sides have suffered. The friends of the sisters think that Dr. Bourneville drove them out with hate, but I do not believe that to have been the case. The plain case was that the sisters would not learn anything new or change their methods, and Dr. Bourneville, a scientist of distinction and one of the greatest of neurologists, could not tolerate the methods of five hundred years ago. And he has suffered persecution for his reforms, almost to the crippling of his career. Then, after all, his courses of instruction were theoretical only, not practical, so that the work of reform still waited for a woman's hand—nevertheless Dr. Bourneville towers up, a mighty pioneer, the first in the modern movement in France.

A woman's hand next took up the work of reform and carried it through. This was Dr. Anna Hamilton, of Bordeaux. Slight, delicate, quiet, and unassuming, clear as to her dark eyes and most keen and trenchant as to her direct logical thoughts, Dr. Hamilton wrote as her Thesis an account of nursing which attracted general attention, and in 1890 began developing a training-school in Bordeaux on the lines laid down by Miss Nightingale. The glorious vitality of this school, which I hope to visit and describe later, is proved by its graduates, who have begun the work of reformation in other hospitals. But Bordeaux is far from Paris, and Paris is proud, like all big cities, and slow to appreciate what is being done in the provinces. It seemed to an outsider as if Dr. Hamilton's eminence was but grudgingly conceded in the great city. Dr. Hamilton has written much, and admirably, upon training methods; if her criticisms sometimes cut sharply, they are nevertheless impersonal and accurate.

A group of three women next portrayed the bright side of private effort in Paris. Mme. Alphen-Salvador, who founded the School for Nurses of the rue Amyot; Mlle. Chaptal, who directs the School for Nurses founded by Mme. Taine in the rue Vercingetorix, and Mme.

Gillot, who was formerly directress of the schools of the Salpêtrière, and who founded the first French nursing journal. Mme. Gillot's paper was historically highly interesting, for she told of the early days of teaching, while the addresses of the others were illumined by previous visits to their most charming and attractive schools, privately managed. Perhaps the greatest mission of these two schools has been to offer a demonstration to the official hospital world of Paris. Keenly one realized afresh the diversity in unity that is working for the good of this old world. Mme. Alphen-Salvador's free and humanitarian ethics are not different from the religious ideals of Mlle. Chaptal, who made an impression upon the assembly all the stronger because she had been previously all but unknown to its foreign members. This frail young woman, the possessor of rare mental power, is distinguished for her useful social work in the warfare against tuberculosis, and that against infant mortality, and has received the highest honors given by the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. In order to equip herself the better for these aims, she went through the course of teaching given in the Paris hospitals and is now heart and soul absorbed in the questions of higher education and professional training for nurses. The nurses under her charge go every morning for four hours' practical work, and twice a week in the afternoons in the same way, to the large hospitals, taking, in turn, general and special work.

A number of physicians took part in the program. Dr. Dubrisay read a valuable paper on "Aid to Mothers"; Dr. Lande, of Bordeaux, described hospital administration in the provinces and spoke most cordially on the school nursing and on educational questions; Dr. Rist spoke on "What Remains to be Done," and Dr. Letulle was very genial in his discussion of improved teaching for nurses. Dr. Ley, of Belgium, spoke on mental nursing, and brought two of his nurses from Belgium.

Over three hundred nurses were at the conference. Great Britain turned out splendidly with two hundred and twenty matrons and nurses, many of whom are known world-wide. Mrs. Fenwick of course was the guiding spirit of the whole conference, and indefatigable as usual. Miss Stewart was there; Mrs. Treacy, the president of the Irish Nurses' Association; Miss Breay, Miss Burr, and Miss Hughes among our old friends (but we greatly missed our absent Miss Mollett) and a fine group from Scotland. A group of English nurses came in uniform, as did also a group of the Bordeaux and some of the Paris nurses, and I heard several times expressed the regret that

all those present did not bring their uniforms for at least one appearance, as the many countries represented would have made a most interesting picture. Sister Karll came with a party of forty Germans and ten Danish nurses, and some of them wore their uniforms. There were nearly thirty Americans, of whom Miss Nutting came as the representative of the Superintendents' Society and Mrs. Robb of the Associated Alumnae. Great interest centred about a Finnish nurse and matron of a hospital at Helsingfors, Baroness Mannerhaim, who gave a most interesting account of nursing progress in Finland. Another special figure was Mlle. Villard, a graduate of the school La Source at Lausanne, which has a unique and impressive history, for it was founded in 1859 to assert the right of women to enter nursing without religious bonds, and to receive all of their own earnings, thus being the first school in Europe to establish this double principle which, at that time, was nothing but revolutionary. Another important figure was Miss Pearse, the delegate of the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses and the superintendent of School Nurses under the London County Council.

Miss Lanschot-Hubrecht, the secretary of the Holland Nurses' Association, was a welcome member present, as also Miss Hellfach, of Denmark, and Miss Keith-Payne from New Zealand.

Two more instances of official recognition gave the council much pleasure: Sister Erna Weydemann was sent by the city government of Düsseldorf to take part in the conference, and Miss Maxwell by the directors of the Presbyterian Hospital. Also we conclude that official recognition as well as personal interest was shown in the presence of a number of the supervising nurses from the large Paris hospitals.

The lavish and beautiful hospitality shown to the members of the conference cannot be described in the space at my command. Most important and gratifying was that of the city of Paris which took shape in a truly splendid reception at the Hotel-de-Ville (the stately city hall of Paris) where we were the guests of the Municipal Council. Then there was the reception at the Salpêtrière where we inspected the new school and realized afresh the liberal attitude of M. Mésureur and M. Montreuil; the farewell banquet, and all the many excursions, receptions, visits, and sight-seeing, but these must be left to the delightful recollections of those who shared in them.

The International Council of Nurses, now comprising Great Britain, Germany, and America, will include Holland at its next meeting, and,

we hope, Denmark and Finland, for the nurses of both countries are organized.

One of the most interesting sessions held was that on the Professional Press, when the history of the various nursing journals was read.

The papers on school nursing attracted much attention and have been asked for by several people. Miss Johnson's paper on the work of the nurse in the anti-tuberculosis movement was asked for by M. de Pulligny, of the Department of Hygiene, under the Minister of Commerce.

We were all greatly amused to hear that our old friend, Mr. Burdett, or his emissary, had taken the trouble to come to Paris on the eve of the conference and to go around among the physicians and others to explain that only two or three nurses would come, and as they were not representative it would not be worth while for the French people to pay any attention to them!

Not the least of the kindnesses shown us, and a very practical one, was the generous action of the directors of the Musée Social in giving us the use of the hall without charge. The small entrance fee which we charged, with the sale of programs, united with the modest sum already in the treasury, sufficed to pay our printing bill, which was larger than usual. The programs were printed in both English and French, and the Bordeaux contingent added another gracious and thoughtful act by distributing two hundred copies of their nursing journal containing the full program in French.

Sister Agnes Karll was decidedly one of the lions of the conference, and spoke both in English and German.